POEMS.

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POEMS

BY

FREDERIC W. H. MYERS.

Vassi in Sanleo, e discendesi in Noli:
  Montasi su Bismantova in cacume
  Con esso i piè; ma qui convien ch'uom voli:
Dico con l'ali snelle e con le piume
  Del gran disio, diretro a quel condotto,
  Che speranza mi dava, e facea lume.

Purgatorio, IV. 25.

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*** A third Edition of 'S. Paul' being required I publish with it four poems which have already appeared in 'Macmillan's Magazine' and some hitherto unpublished pieces.

MARCH, 1870.

CONTENTS.

SAINT PAUL.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

CHRIST! I am Christ's! and let the name suffice you,
  Ay, for me too He greatly hath sufficed:
Lo with no winning words I would entice you,
  Paul has no honour and no friend but Christ.

Yes, without cheer of sister or of daughter,
  Yes, without stay of father or of son,
Lone on the land and homeless on the water
  Pass I in patience till the work be done.

Yet not in solitude if Christ anear me
  Waketh him workers for the great employ,
Oh not in solitude, if souls that hear me
  Catch from my joyaunce the surprise of joy.

Hearts I have won of sister or of brother
  Quick on the earth or hidden in the sod,
Lo every heart awaiteth me, another
  Friend in the blameless family of God.

What was their sweet desire and subtle yearning,
  Lovers, and ladies whom their song enrols?
Faint to the flame which in my breast is burning,
  Less than the love with which I ache for souls.

Oh ye are kind, I shall abide and teach you,
  Ye will not fail as men have failed before,
Seek me and leave, ashamed when I beseech you,
  Ever less loving as I love the more.

Yet it was well, and Thou hast said in season
  'As is the master shall the servant be':
Let me not subtly slide into the treason,
  Seeking an honour which they gave not Thee;

Never at even, pillowed on a pleasure,
  Sleep with the wings of aspiration furled,
Hide the last mite of the forbidden treasure,
  Keep for my joys a world within the world,—

Nay but much rather let me late returning
  Bruised of my brethren, wounded from within,
Stoop with sad countenance and blushes burning,
  Bitter with weariness and sick with sin:—

So to thy presence get me and reveal it,
  Nothing ashamed of tears upon thy feet,
Show the sore wound and beg thine hand to heal it,
  Pour thee the bitter, pray thee for the sweet.

Then with a ripple and a radiance thro' me
  Rise and be manifest, o Morning Star!
Flow on my soul, thou Spirit, and renew me,
  Fill with Thyself, and let the rest be far.

Safe to the hidden house of thine abiding
  Carry the weak knees and the heart that faints,
Shield from the scorn and cover from the chiding,
  Give the world joy, but patience to the saints.

Saint, did I say? with your remembered faces,
  Dear men and women, whom I sought and slew!
Ah when we mingle in the heavenly places
  How will I weep to Stephen and to you!

Oh for the strain that rang to our reviling
  Still, when the bruised limbs sank upon the sod,
Oh for the eyes that looked their last in smiling,
  Last on this world here, but their first on God!

Let no man think that sudden in a minute
  All is accomplished and the work is done;—
Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it
  Scarce were it ended in thy setting sun.

Oh the regret, the struggle and the failing!
  Oh the days desolate and useless years!
Vows in the night, so fierce and unavailing!
  Stings of my shame and passion of my tears!

How have I seen in Araby Orion,
  Seen without seeing, till he set again,
Known the night-noise and thünder of the lion,
  Silence and sounds of the prodigious plain!

How have I knelt with arms of my aspiring
  Lifted all night in irresponsive air,
Dazed and amazed with overmuch desiring,
  Blank with the utter agony of prayer!

Shame on the flame so dying to an ember!
  Shame on the reed so lightly overset!
Yes, I have seen him, can I not remember?
  Yes, I have known him, and shall Paul forget?

I, even I who from the fleshly prison
  Caught, (I believe it but I dare not say,)
Rose to the mid light of the Lord arisen,
  Woke to the waking rapture of the day,—

Ah they are shut, the ears of my divining,
  Sealed are the eyes that should have seen Him then:
Look what a beam from the Beloved shining!
  Look what a night of treasonable men!

What was their tale of some one on a summit,
  Looking, I think, upon the endless sea,—
One with a fate, and sworn to overcome it,
  One who was fettered and who should be free?

Round him a robe, for shaming and for searing,
  Ate with empoisonment and stung with fire,
He thro' it all was to his lord uprearing
  Desperate patience of a brave desire.

Ay and for me there shot from the beginning
  Pulses of passion broken with my breath;
Oh thou poor soul, enwrapped in such a sinning,
  Bound in the shameful body of thy death!

SAINT PAUL.

Well, let me sin, but not with my consenting,
  Well, let me die, but willing to be whole:
Never, o Christ,—so stay me from relenting,—
  Shall there be truce betwixt my flesh and soul.

Oft shall that flesh imperil and outweary
  Soul that would stay it in the straiter scope,
Oft shall the chill day and the even dreary
  Force on my heart the frenzy of a hope :—

Lo as some ship, outworn and overladen,
  Strains for the harbour where her sails are furled ;—
Lo as some innocent and eager maiden
  Leans o'er the wistful limit of the world,

Dreams of the glow and glory of the distance,
  Wonderful wooing and the grace of tears,
Dreams with what eyes and what a sweet insistance
  Lovers are waiting in the hidden years :—

Lo as some venturer, from his stars receiving
  Promise and presage of sublime emprise,
Wears evermore the seal of his believing
  Deep in the dark of solitary eyes,

Yea to the end, in palace or in prison,
  Fashions his fancies of the realm to be,
Fallen from the height or from the deeps arisen,
  Ringed with the rocks and sundered of the sea:—

So even I, and with a heart more burning,
  So even I, and with a hope more sweet,
Groan for the hour, o Christ! of thy returning,
  Faint for the flaming of thine advent feet.

What can we do, o'er whom the unbeholden
  Hangs in a night with which we cannot cope?
What but look sunward, and with faces golden
  Speak to each other softly of a hope?

Can it be true, the grace He is declaring?
  Oh let us trust Him, for his words are fair!
Man, what is this, and why art thou despairing?
  God shall forgive thee all but thy despair.

Truly He cannot, after such assurance,
  Truly He cannot and He shall not fail;
Nay, they are known, the hours of thine endurance,
  Daily thy tears are added to the tale:

Never a sigh of passion or of pity,
  Never a wail for weakness or for wrong,
Has not its archive in the angels' city,
  Finds not its echo in the endless song.

Not as one blind and deaf to our beseeching,
  Neither forgetful that we are but dust,
Not as from heavens too high for our up-reaching,
  Coldly sublime, intolerably just:—

Nay but thou knewest us, Lord Christ thou knowest,
  Well thou rememberest our feeble frame,
Thou canst conceive our highest and our lowest,
  Pulses of nobleness and aches of shame.

Therefore have pity!—not that we accuse thee,
  Curse thee and die and charge thee with our woe:
Not thro' thy fault, o Holy One, we lose thee,
  Nay, but our own,—yet hast thou made us so!

Then tho' our foul and limitless transgression
  Grows with our growing, with our breath began,
Raise thou the arms of endless intercession,
  Jesus, divinest when thou most art man!

Also I ask, but ever from the praying
  Shrinks my soul backward, eager and afraid,
Point me the sum and shame of my betraying,
  Show me, o Love, thy wounds which I have made!

Yes, thou forgivest, but with all forgiving
  Canst not renew mine innocence again:
Make thou, o Christ, a dying of my living,
  Purge from the sin but never from the pain!

So shall all speech of now and of to-morrow,
  All he hath shown me or shall show me yet,
Spring from an infinite and tender sorrow,
  Burst from a burning passion of regret:

Standing afar I summon you anigh him,
  Yes, to the multitudes I shout and say,
'This is my King! I preach and I deny him,
  Christ! whom I crucify anew to-day.'

See, when a fireship in mid ocean blazes
  Lone on the battlements a swimmer stands,
Looks for a help, and findeth not, and raises
  High for a moment melancholy hands;

Then the sad ship, to her own funeral flaring,
  Holds him no longer in her arms, for he
Simple and strong and desolate and daring
  Leaps to the great embraces of the sea.

So when around me for my soul's affrighting,
  Madly red-litten of the woe within,
Faces of men and deeds of their delighting
  Stare in a lurid cruelty of sin,

Thus as I weary me and long and languish,
  Nowise availing from that pain to part,—
Desperate tides of the whole great world's anguish
  Forced thro' the channels of a single heart,—

Then let me feel how infinite around me
  Floats the eternal peace that is to be,
Rush from the demons, for my King has found me,
  Leap from the universe and plunge in Thee!

Thou with strong prayer and very much entreating
  Willest be asked, and thou shalt answer then,
Show the hid heart beneath creation beating,
  Smile with kind eyes and be a man with men.

Were it not thus, o King of my salvation,
  Many would curse to thee and I for one,
Fling thee thy bliss and snatch at thy damnation,
  Scorn and abhor the shining of the sun,

Ring with a reckless shivering of laughter
  Wroth at the woe which thou hast seen so long,
Question if any recompense hereafter
  Waits to atone the intolerable wrong:

Is there not wrong too bitter for atoning?
  What are these desperate and hideous years?
Hast Thou not heard Thy whole creation groaning,
  Sighs of the bondsmen, and a woman's tears?

Yes, and to her, the beautiful and lowly,
  Mary a maiden, separate from men,
Camest thou nigh and didst possess her wholly,
  Close to thy saints, but thou wast closer then.

Once and for ever didst thou show thy chosen,
  Once and for ever magnify thy choice;—
Scorched in love's fire or with his freezing frozen,
  Lift up your hearts, ye humble, and rejoice!

Not to the rich He came and to the ruling,
  (Men full of meat, whom wholly He abhors,)
Not to the fools grown insolent in fooling
  Most, when the lost are dying at the doors;

Nay but to her who with a sweet thanksgiving
Took in tranquillity what God might bring,
Blessed Him and waited, and within her living
Felt the arousal of a Holy Thing.

Ay for her infinite and endless honour
Found the Almighty in this flesh a tomb,
Pouring with power the Holy Ghost upon her,
Nothing disdainful of the Virgin's womb.

East the forefront of habitations holy
  Gleamed to Engedi, shone to Eneglaim:
Softly thereout and from thereunder slowly
  Wandered the waters, and delayed, and came.

Then the great stream, which having seen he showeth,
  Hid from the wise but manifest to him,
Flowed and arose, as when Euphrates floweth,
  Rose from the ankles till a man might swim.

Even with so soft a surge and an increasing,
  Drunk of the sand and thwarted of the clod,
Stilled and astir and checked and never-ceasing
  Spreadeth the great wave of the grace of God;

Bears to the marishes and bitter places
  Healing for hurt and for their poisons balm,
Isle after isle in infinite embraces
  Floods and enfolds and fringes with the palm.

Ay and afar to realms and to recesses
  Seen in a storm, discovered in a dream,
Fields which no folk nor any power possesses,
  Oceans ungirdled of the ocean-stream :—

Yes or if loose and free, as some are telling,
  (Little I know it and I little care,)
This my poor lodge, my transitory dwelling,
  Swings in the bright deep of the endless air,—

Round it and round His prophets shall proclaim Him,
  Springing thenceforth and hurrying therethro',—
Each to the next the generations name Him,
  Honour unendingly and know anew.

Great were his fate who on the earth should linger,
  Sleep for an age and stir himself again,
Watching Thy terrible and fiery finger
  Shrivel the falsehood from the souls of men.

Oh that thy steps among the stars would quicken!
  Oh that thine ears would hear when we are dumb!
Many the hearts from which the hope shall sicken,
  Many shall faint before thy kingdom come.

Lo for the dawn, (and wherefore wouldst thou screen it?)
  Lo with what eyes, how eager and alone,
Seers for the sight have spent themselves, nor seen it,
  Kings for the knowledge, and they have not known.

Times of that ignorance with eyes that slumbered
  Seeing He saw not, till the days that are,
Now, many multitudes whom none hath numbered,
  Seek Him and find Him, for He is not far.

Ay and ere now, a triumph and a token,
  Flown o'er the severance of the sundering deep,
Came there who called, and with the message spoken
  Followed the winging of the ways of sleep.

Ay and ere now above the shining city
  Full of all knowledge and a God unknown
Stood I and spake, and passion of my pity
  Drew Him from heaven and showed Him to His own.

Heard ye of her who faint beneath the burthen
  Strained to the cross and in its shadow fell?
Love for a love, the angels' for the earthen,—
  Lord and Redeemer, surely it was well!

She as one wild, whom very stripes enharden,
  Leapt many times from torture of a dream,
Shrank by the loathly olives of the garden,
  Groves of a teacher, and Ilissus' stream:

Then to their temple Damaris would clamber,
  High where an idol till the dawn was done
Bright in a light and eminent in amber
  Caught the serene surprises of the sun.

Thence the strong soul, which never power can pinion,
  Sprang with a wail into the empty air,
Thence the wide eyes upon a hushed dominion
  Looked in a fierce astonishment of prayer:

Looked to Hymettus and the purple heather,
  Looked to Peiræus and the purple sea,
Blending of waters and of winds together,
  Winds that were wild and waters that were free.

So from the soft air, infinite and pearly,
  Breathed a desire with which she could not cope,
Could not, methinks, so eager and so early,
  Chant to her loveliness the dirge of hope:

Could not have done with weeping and with laughter
  Leaving men angry and sweet love unknown,
Could not go forth upon a blank hereafter
  Weak and a woman, aimless and alone.

Therefore with set face and with smiling bitter
  Took she the anguish, carried it apart,—
Ah, to what friend to speak it? it were fitter
  Thrust in the aching hollows of her heart.

Then I preached Christ: and when she heard the
story,—
Oh, is such triumph possible to men?
Never, my King, had I beheld Thy glory,
Never had known Thine excellence till then.

Thou from on high perceivest it were better
All men and women should on earth be free:
Laws that blaspheme and tyrannies that fetter
Snap and evanish at the touch of Thee.

Where is the soul with which thou wilt not tarry,
Raise from her nothingness and love her long?
His, shall I say? who to the end must carry
Hid in his body the extremest wrong?

Nay, but for him a birth and a baptizing
Came in the fair flow of the stranger stream,
Whence he arose as when a seer arising
Wears in his eyes the wonder of a dream.

Gone was the saint, nor staying for another,
  Home thro' the wilderness he read and ran,
Bought and adopted, and in Christ a brother,
  Claimed and completed, and in Christ a man.

Once for the least of children of Manasses
  God had a mission and a deed to do,
Wherefore the welcome that all speech surpasses
  Called him and hailed him greater than he knew;

Asked him no more, but took him as he found him,
  Filled him with valour, slung him with a sword,
Bade him go on until the tribes around him
  Mingled his name with naming of the Lord.

Also of John a calling and a crying
  Rang in Bethabara till strength was spent,
Cared not for counsel, stayed not for replying,
  John had one message for the world, Repent.

John, than which man a sadder or a greater
  Not till this day has been of woman born,
John like some iron peak by the Creator
  Fired with the red glow of the rushing morn.

This when the sun shall rise and overcome it
  Stands in his shining desolate and bare,
Yet not the less the inexorable summit
  Flamed him his signal to the happier air.

This is His will: He takes and He refuses,
  Finds him ambassadors whom men deny,
Wise ones nor mighty for his saints He chooses,
  No, such as John or Gideon or I.

He as He wills shall solder and shall sunder,
  Slay in a day and quicken in an hour,
Tune him a chorus from the Sons of Thunder,
  Forge and transform my passion into power.

Ay, for this Paul, a scorn and a reviling,
  Weak as you know him and the wretch you see,—
Even in these eyes shall ye behold His smiling,
  Strength in infirmities and Christ in me.

Often for me between the shade and splendour
 Ceos and Tenedos at dawn were grey,
Welling of waves, disconsolate and tender,
 Sighed on the shore and waited for the day.

Then till the bridegroom from the east advancing
 Smote him a waterway and flushed the lawn
God with sweet strength, with terror, and with trancing,
 Spake in the purple mystery of dawn.

Oh what a speech, and greater than our learning!
 Scarcely remembrance can the joy renew;
What were they then, the sights of our discerning,
 Sorrows we suffer, and the deeds we do?

Lo every one of them was sunk and swallowed,
  Morsels and motes in the eternal sea;
Far was the call, and farther as I followed
  Grew there a silence round the Lord and me.

Oh could I tell ye surely would believe it!
  Oh could I only say what I have seen!
How should I tell or how can ye receive it,
  How, till He bringeth you where I have been?

Therefore, o Lord, I will not fail nor falter,
  Nay but I ask it, nay but I desire,
Lay on my lips thine embers of the altar,
  Seal with the sting and furnish with the fire;

Give me a voice, a cry and a complaining,—
  Oh let my sound be stormy in their ears!
Throat that would shout but cannot stay for straining,
  Eyes that would weep but cannot wait for tears.

Quick in a moment, infinite for ever,
  Send an arousal better than I pray,
Give me a grace upon the faint endeavour,
  Souls for my hire and Pentecost to-day!

Lo as some bard on isles of the Aegean
  Lovely and eager when the earth was young,
Burning to hurl his heart into a paean,
  Praise of the hero from whose loins he sprung;—

He, I suppose, with such a care to carry,
  Wandered disconsolate and waited long,
Smiting his breast, wherein the notes would tarry,
  Chiding the slumber of the seed of song:

Then in the sudden glory of a minute
  Airy and excellent the proëm came,
Rending his bosom, for a god was in it,
  Waking the seed, for it had burst in flame.

So even I athirst for his inspiring,
  I who have talked with Him forget again,
Yes, many days with sobs and with desiring
  Offer to God a patience and a pain;

Then thro' the mid complaint of my confession,
  Then thro' the pang and passion of my prayer,
Leaps with a start the shock of his possession,
  Thrills me and touches, and the Lord is there.

Lo if some pen should write upon your rafter
  Mene and mene in the folds of flame,
Think you could any memories thereafter
  Wholly retrace the couplet as it came?

Lo if some strange intelligible thunder
  Sang to the earth the secret of a star,
Scarce could ye catch, for terror and for wonder,
  Shreds of the story that was pealed so far:—

Scarcely I catch the words of his revealing,
  Hardly I hear Him, dimly understand,
Only the Power that is within me pealing
  Lives on my lips and beckons to my hand.

Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest
  Cannot confound nor doubt Him nor deny:
Yea with one voice, o world, tho' thou deniest,
  Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.

Rather the earth shall doubt when her retrieving
  Pours in the rain and rushes from the sod,
Rather than he for whom the great conceiving
  Stirs in his soul to quicken into God.

Ay, tho' thou then shouldst strike him from his glory
  Blind and tormented, maddened and alone,
Even on the cross would he maintain his story,
  Yes and in hell would whisper, I have known.

God, who at sundry times in manners many
  Spake to the fathers and is speaking still,
Eager to find if ever or if any
  Souls will obey and hearken to His will,—

Who that one moment has the least descried Him,
  Dimly and faintly, hidden and afar,
Doth not despise all excellence beside Him,
  Pleasures and powers that are not and that are,—

Ay amid all men bear himself thereafter
  Smit with a solemn and a sweet surprise,
Dumb to their scorn and turning on their laughter
  Only the dominance of earnest eyes?—

God, who whatever frenzy of our fretting
  Vexes sad life to spoil and to destroy,
Lendeth an hour for peace and for forgetting,
  Setteth in pain the jewel of his joy:—

Gentle and faithful, tyrannous and tender,
  Ye that have known Him, is He sweet to know?
Softly he touches, for the reed is slender,
  Wisely enkindles, for the flame is low.

God, who when Enoch on the earth was holy
  Saved him from death and Noe from the sea,
Planned Him a purpose that should ripen slowly,
  Found in Chaldaea the elect Chaldee,—

God, who for sowing of the seed thereafter
  Called him from Charran, summoned him from Ur,
Gave to his wife a weeping and a laughter,
  Light to the nations and a son for her,—

God, who in Israel's bondage and bewailing
  Heard them and granted them their heart's desire,
Clave them the deep with power and with prevailing,
  Gloomed in the cloud and glowed into the fire,

Fed them with manna, furnished with a fountain,
  Followed with waves the raising of the rod,
Drew them and drave, till Moses on the mountain
  Died of the kisses of the lips of God,—

God, who was not in earth when it was shaken,
  Could not be found in fury of the flame,
Then to his seer, the faithful and forsaken,
  Softly was manifest and spake by name,

Showed him a remnant barred from the betrayal,
  Close in his Carmel, where the caves are dim,
So many knees that had not bent to Baal,
  So many mouths that had not kissed him,—

God, who to glean the vineyard of his choosing
  Sent them evangelists till day was done,
Bore with the churls, their wrath and their refusing,
  Gave at the last the glory of His Son :—

Lo as in Eden when the days were seven
  Pison thro' Havilah that softly ran
Bare on his breast the changes of the heaven,
  Felt on his shores the silence of a man :

Silence, for Adam when the day departed
  Left him in twilight with his charge to keep
Careless and confident and single-hearted
  Trusted in God and turned himself to sleep :

Then in the midnight stirring in his slumber
  Opened his vision on the heights and saw
New without name or ordinance or number,
  Set for a marvel, silent for an awe,

Stars in the firmament above him beaming,
  Stars in the firmament, alive and free,
Stars, and of stars the innumerable streaming,
  Deep in the deeps, a river in the sea;—

These as he watched thro' march of their arising,
  Many in multitudes and one by one,
Somewhat from God with a superb surprising
  Breathed in his eyes the promise of the sun.

So tho' our Daystar from our sight be taken,
  Gone from his brethren, hidden from his own,
Yet in his setting are we not forsaken,
  Suffer not shadows of the dark alone.

Not in the west is Thine appearance ended,
  Neither from night shall Thy renewal be,
Lo, for the firmament in spaces splendid
  Lighteth her beacon-fires ablaze for Thee:

Holds them and hides and drowns them and discovers,
  Throngs them together, kindles them afar,
Sheweth, o Love, Thy multitude of lovers,
  Souls that shall know Thee and the saints that are.

Look what a company of constellations!
  Say can the sky so many lights contain?
Hath the great earth these endless generations?
  Are there so many purified thro' pain?

These thro' all glow and eminence of glory
  Cry for a brighter, who delayeth long:
Star unto star the everlasting story
  Peals in a mystic sanctity of song,

Witness the hour when many saints assembled
  Waited the Spirit, and the Spirit came;
Ay with hearts tremulous and house that trembled,
  Ay with cleft tongues, and the Holy Ghost, and flame.

Witness the men whom with a word He gaineth,
  Bold who were base and voiceful who were dumb:—
Battle, I know, so long as life remaineth,
  Battle for all, but these have overcome.

Witness the women, of His children sweetest,—
  Scarcely earth seeth them but earth *shall* see,—
Thou in their woe Thine agony completest,
  Christ, and their solitude is nigh to Thee.

What is this psalm from pitiable places
  Glad where the messengers of peace have trod?
Whose are these beautiful and holy faces
  Lit with their loving and aflame with God?

Eager and faint, empassionate and lonely,
These in their hour shall prophesy again:
This is His will who hath endured, and only
Sendeth the promise where He sends the pain.

Ay unto these distributeth the Giver
Sorrow and sanctity, and loves them well,
Grants them a power and passion to deliver
Hearts from the prison-house and souls from hell.

Thinking hereof I wot not if the portal
Opeth already to my Lord above:
Lo there is no more mortal and immortal,
Nought is on earth or in the heavens but love.

Hark what a sound, and too divine for hearing,
Stirs on the earth and trembles in the air!
Is it the thunder of the Lord's appearing?
Is it the music of His people's prayer?

Surely He cometh, and a thousand voices
  Shout to the saints and to the deaf are dumb;
Surely He cometh, and the earth rejoices
  Glad in His coming who hath sworn, I come.

This hath He done and shall we not adore Him?
  This shall He do and can we still despair?
Come let us quickly fling ourselves before Him,
  Cast at his feet the burthen of our care,

Flash from our eyes the glow of our thanksgiving,
  Glad and regretful, confident and calm,
Then thro' all life and what is after living
  Thrill to the tireless music of a psalm.

Yea thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning
  He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed:
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
  Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.

SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST.

"And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me."

O JESUS, if one minute, if one hour
Thou wouldst come hitherward and speak with John!
Nay, but be present only, nay, but come:
And I shall look, and as I look on thee
Find in thine eyes the answer and the end.

And I am he who once in Nazareth,
A child, nor knowing yet the prophet's woe,
In childly fashion sought thee, and even then
Perceived a mute withdrawal, open eyes
That drooped not for caressing, brows that knew
Dominion, and the babe already king.

Ah Mary, but thou also, thou as I,
With eager tremulous humilities,

With dumb appeal and tears that dared not flow,
Hast laid thy loving arms about the boy,
And clasped him wistfully and felt him far.

And ever as I grew his loveliness
Grew with me, and the yearning turned to pain.
Then said I,—"Nay, my friends, no need is now
For John to tarry with you; I have seen,
I have known him; I go hence, and all alone
I carry Jesus with me till I die."

And that same day, being past the Passover,
I gat me to the desert, and stayed to see
Joseph and Mary holding each a hand
Of one that followed meekly; and I was gone,
And with strange beasts in the great wilderness
I laid me, fearing nothing, and hardly knew
On what rough meat in what unwonted ways
I throve, or how endured the frost and fire;
But moaned and carried in my heart for him

A first and holy passion, boy for boy,
And loved the hills that look on Nazareth
And every fount that pours upon the plain.

Then once with trembling knees and heart afire
I ran, I sought him: but my Lord at home
Bright in the full face of the dawning day
Stood at his carpentry, and azure air
Inarched him, scattered with the glittering green:
I saw him standing, I saw his face, I saw
His even eyebrows over eyes grey-blue,
From whence with smiling there looked out on me
A welcome and a wonder,—"Mine so soon?"—
Ah me, how sweet and unendurable
Was that confronting beauty of the boy!
Jesus, thou knowest I had no answer then,
But leapt without a word, and flung away,
And dared not think thereof, and looked no more.

And after that with wonder rose in me
Strange speech of early prophets, and a tale
First learnt and last forgotten, song that fell
With worship from the lonely Israelites,
Simeon and Anna, for these twain as one
Fast by the altar and in the courts of God
Led a long age in fair expectancy.
For all about them swept the heedless folk,
Unholy folk and market merchandise,
They each from each took courage, and with prayer
Made ready for the coming of a King.
So, when the waves of Noe on forest and hill
Ran ruinous, and all herbs had lost the life
Of greenness and the memory of air,
The cedar-trees alone on Lebanon
Spread steadfastly invulnerable arms.

That was no sleep when clear the vision came,

Bright in the night and truer than the day:—
For there with brows newborn and locks that flew
Was Adam, and his eyes remembered God;
And Eve, already fallen, already in woe,
Knowing a lovelier promise for the pain;
And after these, unknown, unknowable,
The grave gigantic visage of dead men,
With looks that are not ours, with speech to say
That no man dares interpret; then I saw
A maiden such as countrymen afield
Greet reverently, and love her as they see;
And after that a boy with face so fair,
With such a glory and a wonder in it,
I grieved to find him born upon the earth
To man's life and the heritage of sin;
And last of all that Mary whom I knew
Stood with such parted lips and face a-glow
As long-since when the angel came to her;

And all these pointed forward, and I knew
That each was prophet and singer and sire and seer,
That each was priest and mother and maid and king,
With longing for the babe of Nazareth,
For that man-child who should be born and reign.

And once again I saw him, in latter days
Fraught with a deeper meaning, for he came
To my baptizing, and the infinite air
Blushed on his coming, and all the earth was still;
Gently he spake; I answered; God from heaven
Called, and I hardly heard him, such a love
Streamed in that orison from man to man.
Then shining from his shoulders either-way
Fell the flood Jordan, and his kingly eyes
Looked in the east, and star-like met the sun.
Once in no manner of similitude,
And twice in thunderings and thrice in flame,
The Highest ere now hath shown him secretly;

But when from heaven the visible Spirit in air
Came verily, lighted on him, was alone,
Then knew I, then I said it, then I saw
God in the voice and glory of a man.

And one will say, "And wilt thou not forget
The unkindly king that hath forgotten thee?"
Nay, I remember; like my sires who sat
Faithful and stubborn by Euphrates' stream,
Nor in their age forgot Jerusalem,
Nor reared their children for another joy.
O Jesus, if thou knewest, if thou couldst know,
How in my heart through sleep and pain and prayer
Thy royalty remaineth; how thy name
Falls from my lips unbidden, and the dark
Is thick with lying shades that are not thou,—
Couldst thou imagine it, O tender soul!
At least in vision thou wouldst come to me;

I should not only hear of dumb that sing
And lame that leap around thee, and all thy ways
Joyful, and on thy breast another John.

How should I not remember? Is dusk of day
Forgetful, or the winter of the sun?
Have these another glory? or whom have I
In all the world but Jesus for my love?
Whereinsoever breath may rise and die
Their generations follow on, and earth
Each in their kind replenisheth anew,
Only like him she bears not nor hath borne
One in her endless multitude of men.

And these were ever about me; morn by morn
Mine eyes again desired him, and I saw
The thronging Hebrews thicken, and my heart
Sank, and the prophet served another day.

Yet sometimes when by chance the rulers came,

Encharnelled in their fatness, men that smile,
Sit in high seats, and swell with their desire,
My strong limbs shook, and my heart leapt and fell
With passion of sheer scorn, with speech that slew,
With glances that among them running dealt
Damnation, as on Egypt ran the flame.
For such men never when I look on them
Can keep their pride or smiling, but their brow
Droops from its base dominion, and their voice
Rings hollower with a stirring fear within,
Till flushes chill to paleness, and at length
From self-convicted eyes evanisheth
The false and fickle lumour of their joy.
  For quick and fitfully with feast and song
Men make a tumult round them, and console
With sudden sport a momentary woe;
But if thou take one hence, and set him down
In some strange jeopardy on enormous hills,

Or swimming at night alone upon the sea,
His lesser life falls from him, and the dream
Is broken which had held him unaware,
And with a shudder he feels his naked soul
In the great black world face to face with God.
This also for that miserable man
Is a worse trouble than his heart can know,
That in the strait and sodden ways of sin
He has made him alien to the plenteous day,
Cut off from friendliness with woods that wave
And happy pasture and carousing sea,
And whatsoever loving things enjoy
Simply the kind simplicity of God.
For these are teachers; not in vain his seers
Have dwelt in solitudes and known that God
High up in open silence and thin air
More presently reveals him, having set
His chiefest temples on the mountain-tops,

His kindling altar in the hearts of men.
And these I knew with peace and lost with pain,
And oft for whistling wind and desert air
Lamented, and in dreams was my desire
For the flood Jordan, for the running sound
And broken glitters of the midnight moon.
But now all this fades from me, and the life
Of prophecy, and summers that I knew.
Yea, and though once I looked on many men,
And spake them sweet and bitter speech, and heard
Such secrets as a tempest of the soul .
Once in a lifetime washes black and bare
From desperate recesses of shut sin,
Yet all is quite forgotten, and to-day
From the strange past no sign remains with me
But simple and tremendous memories
Of morning and of even and of God.

Ah me, ah me, for if a man desire

Gold or great wealth or marriage with a maid
How easily he wins her, having served
Seven years perchance, and counting that for gain;
But whoso wants God only and lets life go,
Seeks him with sorrow, and pursues him far,
And finds him weeping, and in no long time
Again the High and Unapproachable
Evanishing escapeth, and that man
Forgets the life and struggle of the soul,
Falls from his hope, and dreams it was a dream.

Yet back again perforce with sorrow and shame
Who once hath known him must return, nor long
Can cease from loving, nor endures alone
The dreadful interspace of dreams and day,
Once quick with God; nor is content as those
Who look into each other's eyes and seek
To find one strong enough to uphold the earth,
Or sweet enough to make it heaven: aha,

Whom seek they or whom find? for in all the world
There is none but thee, my God, there is none but thee.

And this it is that links together as one
The sad continual companies of men;
Not that the old earth stands, and Ararat
Endureth, and Euphrates till to-day
Remembers where God walked beside the stream;
Nay rather that souls weary and hearts afire
Have everywhere besought him, everywhere
Have found and found him not; and age to age,
Though all else pass and fail, delivereth
At least the great tradition of their God.
For even thus on Ur and Mahanaim
By Asian rivers gathering to the sea,
When the huge stars shone gold, and dim and still
Dewed in the dusk the innocent yearlings lay,
With constant eyes the serious shepherd-men

Renewed the old desiring, sought again
The mute eternal Presence; and for these
Albeit sometimes the sundering firmament
One moment to no bodily sense revealed
Unspeakably an imminence of love;—
Yet by no song have our forefathers known
To set the invisible in sight of men,
Nor in all years have any wisdom found
But patient hope and dumb humility.

Yea, Lord, I know it, teach me yet anew
With what a fierce and patient purity
I must confront the horror of the world.
For very little space on either hand
Parts the sane mind from madness; very soon
By the intenser pressure of one thought
Or clearer vision of one agony
The soothfast reason trembles, all things fade

In blackness, and the demon enters in.—
I would I never may be left of thee,
O God, my God, in whatsoever ill;
Be present while thou strikest, thus shall grow
At least a solemn patience with the pain;—
When thou art gone, what is there in the world
Seems not dishonoured, desperate with sin?
The stars are threatful eyeballs, and the air
Hangs thick and heavy with the wrath of God,
And even pure pity in my heart congeals
To idle anger with thy ways and thee,
Nor any care for life remains to me,
Nor trust in love, nor fellowship with men,
But past my will the exasperated brain
Thinks bitter thoughts, and I no more am John.

It is not when man's heart is nighest heaven
He hath most need of servant-seraphim,—

Albeit that height be holy and God be still,
And lifted up he dies with his desire,
That only once the Highest for dear love's sake
Would set himself in whispers of a man:—
Nay, but much rather when one flat on earth
Knows not which way to grovel, or where to flee
From the overmastering agony of sin,
Then his deed tears him till he find one pure
To know it and forgive: "For God," saith he,
"Still on the unjust sends unchangeable
These scornful boons of summer and of rain,
And howsoever I fall, in dawn and day
Drowns me, and splendidly ignores my sin."

And how should pity and anger cease, or shame
Have done with blushes, till the prophet know
That God not yet hath quite despaired of men?
Oh that the heavens were rent and one came down
Who saw men's hurt with kindlier eyes than mine,

Fiercelier than I resented every wrong,
Sweated more painful drops than these that flow
In nightly passion for my people's sin,—
Died with it, lived beyond it,—nay, what now?
If this indeed were Jesus, this the Lamb
Whom age by age the temple-sacrifice
Not vainly had prefigured, and if so
In one complete and sacred agony
He lifted all the weight of all the world,—
And if men knew it, and if men clung to him
With desperate love and present memory,—
I know not how,—till all things fail in fire;
That were enough, and, o my God, for them,
For them there might be peace, but not for me.

And even Elias often on the hills
Towered in a flaming sunset, sick at heart;
Often with bare breast on the dewy earth

Lay all night long, and all night comfortless
Poured his abounding bitterness of soul:
I know that not without a wail he bore
The solitude of prophets till that day
When death divine and unbelievable
Blazed in the radiant chariot and blown fire,
Whereof the very memory melts mine eyes
And holds my heart with wonder: can it be
That thus obscurely to his ministers
Jehovah portioneth eternal love?

Here in the hazardous joy of woman and man
Consider with how sad and eager eyes
They lean together, and part, and gaze again,
Regretting that they cannot in so brief time,
With all that sweet abandonment, outpour
Their flowing infinity of tenderness.
God's fashion is another; day by day
And year by year he tarrieth; little need

The Lord should hasten; whom he loves the most
He seeks not oftenest, nor wooes him long,
But by denial quickens his desire,
And in forgetting best remembers him,
Till that man's heart grows humble and reaches out
To the least glimmer of the feet of God,
Grass on the mountain-tops, or the early note
Of wild birds in the hush before the day,—
Wherever sweetly in the ends of the earth
Are fragments of a peace that knows not man.

Then on our utter weakness and the hush
Of hearts exhausted that can ache no more,
On such abeyance of self and swoon of soul
The Spirit hath lighted oft, and let men see
That all our vileness alters God no more
Than our dimmed eyes can quench the stars in
heaven:—
From years ere years were told, through all the sins,

Unknown sins of innumerable men,
God is himself for ever, and shows to-day,
As erst in Eden, the eternal hope.

Wherefore if anywise from morn to morn
I can endure a weary faithfulness,
From minute unto minute calling low
On God who once would answer, it may be
He hath a waking for me, and some surprise
Shall from this prison set the captive free
And love from fears and from the flesh the soul.
For even thus beside Gennesaret
In solemn night some demon-haunted man
Runs from himself, and nothing knows in heaven
But blackness, yet around him unaware
With standing hills and high expectancy,
With early airs and shuddering and calm,
The enormous morning quickens, and lake and tree

Perceive each other dimly in a dream:
And when at last with bodily frame forspent
He throws him on the beach to sleep or die,
That very moment rises full and fair
Thy sun, o Lord, the sun that brings the day.

I wait it; I have spoken; even now
This hour may set me in one place with God.
I hear a wantoning in Herod's hall,
And feet that seek me; very oft some chance
Leaps from the folly and the wine of kings;—
O Jesus, spirit and spirit, soul and soul,—
O Jesus, I shall seek thee, I shall find,
My love, my master, find thee, though I be
Least, as I know, of all men woman-born.

FINAL PERSEVERANCE.

Say is it true that if a soul up-springing
  Once,—for I know not nor it matters when,—
Plainly hath heard the seraphs at their singing,
  Clearly hath looked upon the Light of men,—

Say ye that afterward tho' fast and faster
  Downward she travel, daily she decline,
Marred with defeat and broken with disaster,
  Filled with the earth, forgetting the divine,

Yet shall the fiend not utterly undo her,
  Cannot constrain her living in the grave,—
God at the last shall know her as he knew her,
  Come as he came and as he sought shall save?

Yes! tho' the darts exasperate and bloody
  Fell on the fair side of Sebastian faint,
Think ye the round wounds and the gashes ruddy
  Scar in God's house the beauty of the saint?

Who were the Lord to mock him and imprison,
  Cheat with an endless agony of breath,
Bid him arise, and in his body risen
  Carry the trouble and the pains of death?

No! if he wake it is a king's awaking
  Fresh from the night and fairer for his rest:
Aye and the soul, to resurrection breaking,
  Springs in her flower and blossoms at her best.

Then tho' the man with struggle and with straining
  Find not the faith and passion of the boy,
Yet shall he march upon the years remaining
  Clad with a bitter and courageous joy;—

Morn after morn renewing the endeavour,
  Eve after eve regretting: it is vain!
Ah the sea-snake! a demi-god forever
  Smote it and slew it and it was not slain.—

So, while the great deep round the king and under
  Rose to the blowing, bellowed to the roar,
Fierce in the storm and fearless in the thunder
  Sought he a sweet and visionary shore.

Once, as they say, in seeking it he found it,
  Found in the sunset, lost it in the foam,
Westward and north and past it and around it
  Fared in the homeless passion of a home.

Then with great heart amid the sailors craven
  Spake he: 'I leave you, be at rest again,
Sail without me for harbour and for haven,
  Sail happy-hearted for your loves and Spain.'

So to the waves he leapt, but ere his leaping
  Cried, 'Yet a hope! there is a hope for me,
Soon shall my corse upon that isle be sleeping,
  Washed by the welter of the friendly sea.'

THE TRANSLATION OF FAITH.[1]

I.

HIGH in the midst the pictured Pentecost
Showed in a sign the coming of the Ghost,
And round about were councils blazoned
Called by the Fathers in a day long dead,
Who once therein, as well the limner paints,
Upbuilt the faith delivered to the saints.
  Without the council-hall, in dawning day,
The mass of men had left a narrow way

[1] Public Session of the Œcumenical Council, in St. Peter's Rome, January 6 (Feast of the Epiphany), 1870.

Where ever-burning lamps enlock the tomb
In golden glamour and in golden gloom.
There on the earth is peace, and in the air
An aspiration of eternal prayer;
So many a man in immemorial years
Has scarcely seen that image for his tears,
So oft have women found themselves alone
With Christ and Mary on the well-worn stone.
  Thereby the conclave of the bishops went,
With grave brows cherishing a dim intent,
As men who travelled on their eve of death
From every shore that man inhabiteth,
Not knowing wherefore, for the former things
Fade from old eyes of bishops and ot kings.
  With crimson raiment one from Bozrah came,
On brow and breast the rubies flashed in flame;
And this from Tyre, from Tunis that, and he
From Austral islands and the Austral sea;—

And many a swarthy face and stern was there,
And many a man who knows deep things and rare,
Knows the Chaldaic and the Coptic rite,
The Melchian-Greek and Ebio-Maronite,
Strange words of men who speak from long ago,
Lived not our lives, but what we know not know.

And some there were who never shall disdain
The Orders of their poverty and pain;
Amidst all pomp preferring for their need
The simple cowl and customary weed,—
Some white and Carmelite, and some alway
In gentle habit of Franciscan grey.

O Francis! never may thy sainted name
Be thought or written save with soul aflame,
Nor spoken openly nor breathed apart
Without a stir and swelling of the heart;—
O mate of Poverty! O pearl unpriced!
O co-espoused, co-transforate with Christ!

And lo, the sovereign Pontiff, Holy Sire,
Fulfilled anew the Catholic desire;—
Beneath the scroll of Peter's charge unfurled
He sat him at the centre of the world,
Attending till the deeds of God began,
And the One Sacrifice was slain for man.

But yet to me was granted to behold
A greater glory than the Pontiff's gold;—
To my purged eyes before the altar lay
A figure dreamlike in the noon of day;
Nor changed the still face, nor the look thereon,
At ending of the endless antiphon,
Nor for the summoned saints and holy hymn
Grew to my sight less delicate and dim:—
How faint, how fair that immaterial wraith!
But, looking long, I saw that she was Faith.

II.

Last in the midst of all a patriarch came,
Whose nation none durst ask him, nor his name,
Yet 'mid the Eastern sires he seemed as one
Fire-nurtured at the springing of the sun,
And in robe's tint was likest-hued to them
Who wear the Babylonian diadem.
His brows black yet and white unfallen hair
Set in strange frame the face of his despair,
And I despised not, nor can God despise,
The silent splendid anger of his eyes.
A hundred years of search for flying Truth
Had left them glowing with no gleam of youth,
A hundred years of vast and vain desire
Had lit and filled them with consuming fire;
Therethrough I saw his fierce eternal soul
Gaze from beneath that argent aureole;

I saw him bow his hoar majestic head,
I heard him, and he murmured, "Faith is dead."
  Through arch and avenue the rumour ran,
Shed from the mighty presence of the man;
Through arch and avenue and vault and aisle
He cast the terror of his glance awhile,
Then rose at once and spake with hurrying breath,
As one who races with a racing Death.
  "How long ago our fathers followed far
That false flame of the visionary star!
Oh better, better had it been for them
To have perished on the edge of Bethlehem,
Or ere they saw the comet stoop and stay,
And knew the shepherds, and became as they!
Better for us to have been, as men may be,
Sages and silent by the Eastern sea,
Than thus in new delusion to have brought
Myrrh of our prayer, frankincense of our thought,

For One whom knowing not we held so dear,
For One who sware it, but who is not here.
Better for you, this shrine when ye began,
An earthquake should have hidden it from man,
Than thus through centuries of pomp and pain
To have founded and have finished it in vain,—
To have vainly arched the labyrinthine shade,
And vainly vaulted it, and vainly made
For saints and kings an everlasting home
High in the dizzying glories of the dome.
Since not one minute over hall or Host
Flutters the peerless presence of the Ghost,
Nor falls at all, for art or man's device,
On mumbled charm and mumming sacrifice,—
But either cares not, or forspent with care
Has flown into the infinite of air.

Apollo left you when the Christ was born,
Jehovah when the temple's veil was torn,

And now, even now, this last time and again,
The presence of a God has gone from men.
Live in your dreams, if ye must live, but I
Will find the light, and in the light will die."

III.

At that strange speech the sons of men amazed
Each on the other tremulously gazed,
When lo, herself,—herself the age to close,—
From where she lay the very Faith arose;
She stood as never she shall stand again,
And for an instant manifest to men:—
In figure like the Mother-maid who sees
The deepest heart of hidden mysteries,
On that strange night when from her eyes she shed
A holy glory on the painter's bed,
And Agnes and the angels hushed awhile,
Won by her sadness sweeter than a smile.

Such form she wore, nor yet henceforth will care
That form, or form at all, on earth to wear;
For those sweet eyes, which once, with flag unfurled,
So many a prince would follow through the world,—
That face, the light of dreams, the crown of day,
Lo, while we looked on her, was rapt away;
O mystic end and o evanished queen!
When shall we see thee as our sires have seen?

And yet, translated from the Pontiff's side,
She did not die, o say not that she died!
She died not, died not, o the faint and fair!
She could not die, but melted into air.

In that high dome I neither know nor say
What Power and Presence was alive that day,
No, nor what Faith, in what transfigured form,
Rode on the ghostly spaces of the storm:
For sight of eyes nor ear with hearing knew

That windless wind that where it listed blew;
Yet seeing eyes and ears that hear shall be
As dust and nothingness henceforth for me,
Who once have felt the blowing Spirit roll
Life on my life, and on my soul a Soul.

And first the conclave and the choir, and then
The immeasurable multitude of men,
Bowed and fell down, bowed and fell down, as though
A rushing mighty wind had laid them low;
Yea to all hearts a revelation came,
As flying thunder and as flying flame;
A moment then the vault above him seemed
To each man as the heaven that he had dreamed;
A moment then the floor whereon he trod
Became the pavement of the courts of God;
And in the aisles was silence, in the dome
Silence, and no man knew that it was Rome.

ROME, *January* 7, 1870.

A SONG.

THE pouring music, soft and strong,
  Some God within her soul has lit,
Her face is rosy with the song
  And her grey eyes are sweet with it.

A woman so with singing fired,
  Has earth a lovelier sight than this?
Oh he that looked had soon desired
  Her lips to fasten with a kiss.

But love is life or love is sin,
  I hate the pains beyond control;
Give me an hour for drinking in
  Her fragrant and her early soul.

To happier hearts I leave the rest,
  Who less and more than I shall know,
For me, the weary, it is best
  To listen for an hour and go:

To lift her hand, and press, and part,
  And think upon her long and long,
And bear for ever in my heart
  The tender traces of a song.

TWO SISTERS.

FIRST SISTER.

WHEN dusk descends and dews begin
  She sees the forest ghostly fair,
And, half in heaven, is drinking in
  The moonlit melancholy air:
The sons of God have charge and care
  Her maiden grace from foes to keep,
And Jesus sends her unaware
  A maiden sanctity of sleep.

SECOND SISTER.

In dreams, in dreams, with sweet surprise
  I see the lord of all these things;
From night and nought with eager eyes
  He comes, and in his coming sings:

His gentle port is like a king's,
  His open face is free and fair,
And lightly from his brow he flings
  The young abundance of his hair.

FIRST SISTER.

Oh who hath watched her kneel to pray
  In hours forgetful of the sun?
Or seen beneath the dome of day
  The hovering seraph seek the nun?
Her weary years at last have won
  A life from life's confusion free:
What else is this but heaven begun,
  Pure peace and simple chastity?

SECOND SISTER.

Oh never yet to mortal maid
  Such sad divine division came
From all that stirs or makes afraid
  The gentle thoughts without a name;

Through all that lives a sacred shame,
A pulse of pleasant trouble, flows,
And tips the daisy's tinge of flame,
And blushes redder in the rose.

FIRST SISTER.

From lifted head the golden hair
Is soft and blowing in the breeze,
And softly on her brows of prayer
The summer-shadow flits and flees:
Then parts a pathway thro' the trees,
A vista sunlit and serene,
And there and then it is she sees
What none but such as she have seen.

SECOND SISTER.

Oh if with him by lea and lawn
I pressed but once the silvery sod,
And scattered sparkles of the dawn
From aster and from golden-rod,

I would not tread where others trod,
  Nor dream as other maidens do,
Nor more should need to ask of God,
  When God had brought me thereunto.

LOVE AND FAITH.

Lo if a man, magnanimous and tender,
  Lo if a woman, desperate and true,
Make the irrevocable sweet surrender,
  Show to each other what the Lord can do,—

Each, as I know, a helping and a healing,
  Each to the other strangely a surprise,
Heart to the heart its mystery revealing,
  Soul to the soul in melancholy eyes,—

Where wilt thou find a riving or a rending
  Able to sever them in twain again?
God hath begun, and God's shall be the ending,
  Safe in His bosom and aloof from men.

Her thou mayst separate but shalt not sunder
  Tho' thou distress her for a little while;—
Rapt in a worship, ravished in a wonder,
  Stayed on the stedfast promise of a smile,

Scarcely she knoweth if his arms have found her—
  Waves of his breath make tremulous the air—
Or if the thrill within her and around her
  Be but the distant echo of his prayer.

Nay, and much more; for love in his demanding
  Will not be bound in limits of our breath,
Calls her to follow where she sees him standing
  Fairer and stronger for the plunge of death;—

Waketh a vision and a voice within her
  Sweeter than dreams and clearer than complaint,
"Is it a man thou lovest, and a sinner?
  No! but a soul, o woman, and a saint!"

Well,—if to her such prophecy be given,
  Strong to illuminate when sight is dim,
Then tho' my Lord be holy in the heaven
  How should the heavens sunder me from Him?

She and her love,—how dimly has she seen him
  Dark in a dream and windy in a wraith!
I and my Lord,—between me and between Him
  Soareth the lucent ladder of my faith.

Ay, and thereon, descending and ascending,
  Suns at my side and starry in the air,
Angels, His ministers, their tasks are blending,
  Bear me the blessing, render Him the prayer.

FRIENDSHIP AND HOPE.

LOVING and loved and delicate and lowly,
  Rich in all blessing that thy God can send,
Take yet a gift, the simple and the holy
  Gift of the faith and honour of a friend.

Sweet were the woods thro' which we went together,—
  Gladly thou wentest and one glad with thee,—
Drowned in the glow and glory of the weather,
  Kissed with the breath of summer and the sea.

There the great home, above the shadows' sleeping,
  Rises and reddens in the sunset-fires,
There the brave saint, a warrior-vigil keeping,
  Crowns with his crest the forest of the spires.

Often the moon above the moorland gleaming
  Lovely and silent on the mere shall shine,
Oft shall the sweet air thro' the twilight streaming
  Moan in the sombre spaces of the pine.

Oh from the hush and dying of the splendour
  Take thou a patience and a comfort then!
Oh let thine eyes be satisfied and tender
  Knowing the common brotherhood of men!

Children of God! and each as he is straying
  Lights on his fellow with a soft surprise,
Hearkens, perchance, the whisper of his praying,
  Catches the human answer of his eyes.

Then having met they speak and they remember
  All are one family, their sire is one,
Cheers them with June and slays them with December,
  Portions to each the shadow and the sun.

Therefore His children hold to one another,
  Speak of a hope and tarry till the end,
Strong in the bond of sister and of brother,
  Safe in the fellowship of friend and friend.

Οἴκοθεν οἴκαδε.

WHEN summer even softly dies,
  When summer winds are free,
A thousand lamps, a thousand eyes,
  Shall glimmer in the sea:
O look how large, behind, below,
The lucid creatures glance and glow!
They strew with soft and fiery foam
Her streaming way from home to home.

So shines the deep, but high above,
  Beyond the cloudy bars,
The old infinity of love
  Looks silent from the stars:—

When parted friends no more avail
Those sleepless watchers shall not fail,
They learn her looks, they list her sighs,
They love her soft beseeching eyes.

Then in the woman's heart is born
  The child's delight anew,
The Highland glory of the morn,
  The rowans bright with dew;
She hears the flooding stream that falls
By those ancestral castle-walls,
Her father's woods are tossing free
Between her and the southern sea.

Or lovely in a lovely place
  One offers as she stands
Sister to sister sweet embrace
  And hospitable hands;

White-robed as once in happy hours
She stood a rose among the flowers,
And heart to heart would speak and tell
The reason why we loved her well.

So in a dream the nights go by,
  So in a dream the days,
Till, when the good ship knows anigh
  The Asian waterways,
From home to home her love shall set
And hope be stronger than regret,
And rest renew and prayer control
Her sweet unblemishable soul.

The waves subside; she stems at last
  That swift eternal stream;
Her ocean-dreams are overpast,—
  Or is this too a dream?

For child and husband, fast and fain,
Have clasped her in their arms again :—
Let only mothers murmur this,
How babe and mother clasp and kiss.

SIMMENTHAL.

FAR off the old snows evernew
With silver edges cleft the blue
Aloft, alone, divine;
The sunny meadows silent slept,
Silence the sombre armies kept,
The vanguard of the pine.

In that thin air the birds are still,
No ringdove murmurs on the hill
Nor mating cushat calls;

But gay cicalas singing sprang,
And waters from the forest sang
    The song of waterfalls.

O Fate! a few enchanted hours
Beneath the firs, among the flowers,
    High on the lawn we lay,
Then turned again, contented well,
While bright about us flamed and fell
    The rapture of the day.

And softly with a guileless awe
Beyond the purple lake she saw
    The embattled summits glow;
She saw the glories melt in one,
The round moon rise, while yet the sun
    Was rosy on the snow.

Then like a newly-singing bird
The child's soul in her bosom stirred;
    I know not what she sung:—
Because the soft wind caught her hair,
Because the golden moon was fair,
    Because her heart was young.

I would her sweet soul ever may
Look thus from those glad eyes and grey,
    Unfearing, undefiled:
I love her; when her face I see,
Her simple presence wakes in me
    The imperishable child.

ON A GRAVE AT GRINDELWALD.

HERE let us leave him; for his shroud the snow,
  For funeral lamps he has the planets seven,
For a great sign the icy stair shall go
  Between the heights to heaven.

One moment stood he as the angels stand,
  High in the stainless eminence of air;
The next, he was not, to his fatherland
  Translated unaware.

ON AN INVALID.

Lo, as the poet finds at will
Than tenderest words a tenderer still
For one beside him prest;
So from the Lord a mercy flows,
A sweeter balm from Sharon's rose,
For her that loves him best.

And ere the early throstles stir
With some sweet word from God for her
The morn returns anew;

For her His face in the east is fair,
For her His breath is in the air,
    His rainbow in the dew.

At such an hour the promise falls
With glory on the narrow walls,
    With strength on failing breath;
There comes a courage in her eyes,
It gathers for the great emprize,
    The deeds of after death.

Albeit thro' this preluding woe
Subdued and softly she must go
    With half her music dumb,
What heavenly hopes to her belong,
And what a rapture, what a song,
    Shall greet His kingdom come!

So climbers by some Alpine mere
Walk very softly thro' the clear
Unlitten dawn of day:
The morning star before them shows
Beyond the rocks, beyond the snows,
Their never-travelled way.

Or so, ere singers have begun,
The master-organist has won
The folk at eve to prayer:
So soft the tune, it only seems
The music of an angel's dreams
Made audible in air.

But when the mounting treble shakes,
When with a noise the anthem wakes
A song forgetting sin,—

Thro' all her pipes the organ peals,
With all her voice at last reveals
The storm of praise within.

The trump! the trump! how pure and high!
How clear the fairy flutes reply!
How bold the clarions blow!
Nor God Himself has scorned the strain,
But hears it and shall hear again,
And heard it long ago.

FROM ALFRED DE MUSSET

I HAVE lost my life, I have lost my strength,
  And joy, and hope that lingered long,
And, losing all, have lost at length
  The spirit and the pride of song.

How quickly spent a man's desire
  Falls from the mistress of his youth!
And so I loved, and so I tire
  Of my last mistress, ay, of Truth.

And yet she is immortal ; they
Who, ere they know her, pass away,
  Have wasted foolish years :
My God, Thy creature answers Thee ;
One only good remains with me,—
  The memory of tears.

RETROSPECT.

I.

Alas the darkened vault of day!
  The fading stars that shine no more!—
Alas mine eyes that cloud with grey
  That beauty lucid as before!
Alone on some deserted shore,
  Forgetting happy hope, I stand,
And to my own sad self deplore
  The stillness of the empty land.

2.

And I am he who long ago,—
  (How well my heart recalls it yet!)-
Beheld an early sun and low
  In fields I never shall forget;

The roses round were bright and wet
  And all the garden clear with dew,
In pleasant paths my steps were set
  And life was young and love was new.

3.

How changed is this from that estate!
  How vexed with unfamiliar fears!
And from that child more separate
  Than friend from friend of other years,
Who strains quick sight and eager ears
  Forgiveness from the dead to win,
But only sees the dark, and hears
  A soundless echo of his sin.

ANTE DIEM.

"O SEEK not with untimely art
  To ope the bud before it blows,
Bewitching from the folded heart
  Reluctant petals of the rose!

Too quickly cherished, quickly dear,
  She came, the graceful child and gay,—
O leave her in her early year
  Till April crimson into May!

The golden sun shall glance and go,
  Shall rest and tremble in her hair;
Beside her cheek shall love to blow
  The soft and kindly English air;—

O leave her glad with such caress,
  In such embraces clasped and free,
Nor teach thy hasty heart to guess
  The woman and the love to be."

Thus with myself my thoughts complain,
  And so by night shall I be wise,
Till on my heart arise again
  Her open and illumined eyes.

A moment then the past prevails
  And in the man is manhood strong,
Then from the bruised soul exhales
  The sweet and quivering flame of song.

Oh if indeed with time and tide
  Too fast the changeful seasons flow,
And loving life from life divide
  And shape and sunder as they go,—

Yet with what airy bonds I may
  Her flying soul shall I retain,
And sometimes, dreaming in the day,
  Shall see her, as she smiled, again:—

A girlish joy shall haunt the spot,
  A presence shall illume the shade,
And unembraced and unforgot
  Shall rise the vision of a maid.

WIND MOON AND TIDES.

LOOK when the clouds are blowing
  And all the winds are free,
In fury of their going
  They fall upon the sea:
But though the blast is frantic
  And though the tempest raves
The deep immense Atlantic
  Is still beneath the waves.

Then while the Zephyrs tarry,
  Or when the frost is nigh,
The maiden none can marry
  Will beckon from the sky:—

Then with a wild commotion,
  Then with a rush and roar,
The whole enormous ocean
  Is flung upon the shore.

PARIS A MACON.

I saw, I saw the lovely child,
  I watched her by the way,
I learnt her gestures sweet and wild,
  Her loving eyes and gay.

Her name?—I heard not, nay, nor care,—
  Enough it was for me
To find her innocently fair
  And delicately free.

Oh cease and go ere dreams be done,
  Nor trace the angel's birth,
Nor find the paradisal one
  A blossom of the earth!

Thus is it with our subtlest joys,—
  How quick the soul's alarm !
How lightly deed or word destroys
  That evanescent charm !

It comes unbidden, comes unbought,
  Unfettered flees away,—
His swiftest and his sweetest thought
  Can never poet say.

PRAYER.

God, God, how oft in what assault of prayer
  Must man subdue the soul and bend the knee,
How often in the infinite of air
  Must hurl the litanies that cry for thee,
And look to heaven, and tell himself that there
  No voice hath been and yet a voice shall be :-
O say how often, till the last despair
  Seize him and madden, as it maddens me?
But who contends with God? it is in vain :
How should a sinner of the Just complain?
  From the Almighty shall a man be free?
Nay, till I die must I beseech again,
Yea, till I die the pulses of my pain
  Beat with the flow and falling of the sea.

WOULD GOD IT WERE EVENING.

Imprisoned in the soul and in the sin,
  Imprisoned in the body and the pain,
The accustomed hateful memories within,
  Without, the accustomed limbs that ache again:
Alas! a melancholy peace to win
  With all their notes the nightingales complain,
And I such music as is mine begin,
  Awake for nothing and alive in vain.
I find few words and falter; then in scorn
My lips are silent; uncreate, unborn,
  Evanishes the visionary lay;
While from clear air upon my soul forlorn
Falls thro' the heedless splendour of the morn
  A sadness as the sadness of to-day.

WOULD GOD IT WERE MORNING.

MY God, how many times ere I be dead
  Must I the bitterness of dying know?
How often like a corpse upon my bed
  Compose me and surrender me and so
Thro' hateful hours and ill-remembered
  Between the twilight and the twilight go,
By visions bodiless obscurely led
  Thro' many a wild enormity of woe?
And yet I know not but that this is worst,
When with that light, the feeble and the first,
  I start and gaze into the world again,
And gazing find it as of old accurst
And grey and blinded with the stormy burst
  And blank appalling solitude of rain.

IMMORTALITY.

I.

So when the old delight is born anew
  And God re-animates the early bliss
  Seems it not all as one first trembling kiss
Ere soul knew soul with whom she has to do?
'O nights how desolate, o days how few,
  O death in life, if life be this, be this!
  O weighed alone as one shall win or miss
The faint eternity which shines therethro'!
Lo all that age is as a speck of sand
  Lost on the long beach where the tides are free,
And no man metes it in his hollow hand
  Nor cares to ponder it, how small it be;
At ebb it lies forgotten on the land
  And at full tide forgotten in the sea.'

II.

Yet in my hid soul must a voice reply
  Which knows not which may seem the viler gain,
  To sleep for ever or be born again,
The blank repose or drear eternity.
A solitary thing it were to die
  So late begotten and so early slain,
  With sweet life withered to a passing pain,
Till nothing anywhere should still be I.
Yet if for evermore I must convey
These weary senses thro' an endless day
  And gaze on God with these exhausted eyes,
I fear that howsoe'er the seraphs play
My life shall not be theirs nor I as they,
  But homeless in the heart of Paradise.

AFTER AN INTERVIEW.

So while the careless crowd have gazed and gone
  Sits one man stedfast in a chosen place,
And of all faces which they gaze upon
    Desires one only face:

For early morning finds the lover there,
  Also at eventide his eyes are dim,
Till at the last he slowly is aware
    His soul has flown from him.

So also he whom vanished organ-lays
  Have stung to jubilance and thrilled to tears
Sits with sonorous memories of praise
    Tranced in his echoing ears:

Thro' all his blood the billowy clangours roll,
  Thro' all his body leaps the living strain,
And sweetly, stilly, in his hidden soul
    The soft notes sink again.

Then while the trooping singers outward range
  He waits enthralled in that superb surprise;
Like airy ghosts they pass him by, nor change
    His wide and wistful eyes.

So stays he in high heaven a little space,
  Then treads the portal which the others trod,
And issues into silence, face to face
    With darkness and with God.

PALLIDA MORTE FUTURA

I.

THIS is not shame in her courageous eyes,
  Nor on those lids the glitter of a tear,—
Nay, but a rapt seclusion of surprise
  After such woe to find an end so near:—
How lorn in heaven the hurrying winds arise!
  How black the slow waves sway upon the pier!
On the edge of death her haunting memory flies,
  And the utmost marvel has not place for fear.
O waves that ebb, o shadowy airs that err,
With you she speaks, with you she would confer,
  Demanding dumbly what it is to die:
Yet hush ye winds, nor let the billows stir,
I with a single look shall answer her,
  For death knows death and what she is am I.

II.

For even so forlorn and so forsaken,
  So shut and severed from all homes that are,
While in the vault the auroral glories waken,
  False flames, and dying ere the morning star,
My soul in solitude her post has taken,
  Between the two seas, on the narrowing bar,—
Sees on each hand the stormful waters shaken,
  The twin Eternities unite afar.
There mid faiths slain and idols shattered low,
And many a fallen friend and fallen foe,
  She waits by night the flooding tides to be;
And only to herself, and hushed, and slow,
Makes hidden melodies and wails her woe
  Till roar meet roar and sea be mixt with sea.

A CHILD OF THE AGE.

I.

OH for a voice that in a single song
  Could quiver with the hopes and moan the fears
  And speak the speechless secret of the years,
And rise, and sink, and at the last be strong!
O for a trumpet-call to stir the throng
  Of doubtful fighting-men, whose eyes and ears
  Watch till a banner in the East appears
And the skies ring that have been still so long!
O age of mine, if one could tune for thee
  A marching music out of this thy woe!
If one could climb upon a hill and see
  Thy gates of promise on the plain below,
And gaze a minute on the bliss to be
  And knowing it be satisfied to know!

II.

I thought to stand alone upon a height
  Above the waters where my kinsmen lie;
I seemed to hear a promise in the night,
  I dreamed I saw a dawning in the sky:
I said, 'For you, for you, with keener sight,
  I watch till on the waves the dawn be nigh:'
I said, 'While these men slumber, what delight
  That we two should be waking, God and I!'
Ah me! the deathful waters climb and creep,
Far off the melancholy deep to deep
  Murmurs a tidal infinite reply:
'Oh fool, oh foolish prodigal of sleep,
Remains, remains but with the waves to weep,
  Or in the darkness with the dead to die.'

A VISION.

WHAT heart by waiting broken
Shall speak the word unspoken,
And who by tears betoken
  The wisdom he has won?
Or say to him that grieveth
'The hope thy soul believeth
Perchance, perchance, deceiveth,—
  But other hope is none.—

'Ay, deep beyond thy telling
A bitter fount is welling,
Far off a bell is knelling
  The ruin of thy youth:
Hide, hide the future's rising
With dreams and thin disguising;—
Can any man's devising
  Be sadder than the truth?'

Then I with hope undying
Will rise and make replying,—
Will answer to his sighing
  In speech that is a sigh,—
'The bonds that press and fetter,
That chafe the soul and fret her,
What man can know them better,
  O brother men, than I?

'And yet, my burden bearing,
The five wounds ever wearing,—
I too in my despairing
  Have seen him as I say;—
Gross darkness all around him
Enwrapt him and enwound him,—
O late at night I found him
  And lost him in the day!

'Yet bolder grown and braver
At sight of one to save her
My soul no more shall waver,
  With wings no longer furled,—
But cut with one decision
From doubt and men's derision
That sweet and vanished vision
  Shall follow thro' the world.'

SOLOMON.

STANDS the great king regarding as he stands
The bright perfected labour of his hands:
Then with no doubtful voice or trembling tone
Calls to the Presence he has made his own:
    'All gold within and gilded
    This house that I have builded,
It is ready for a King in his array:
    Behind the curtain's hiding
    The Highest is abiding;
We have found Him, He is with us from to day.'

But we grown wiser than the wise and made
For all our wisdom all the more afraid,—
Each man of each despairingly inquires
For God whom with despairing he desires:
'Have ye for all your duty
Beheld him in his beauty?
Are there others who have known him otherwhere?
The days around us darken,
He hears not nor will hearken,
He is gone into the infinite of air.'

LOVER'S SONG.

I THANK thee, dear, for words that fleet,
  For looks that long endure,
For all caresses simply sweet
  And passionately pure;

For blushes mutely understood,
  For silence and for sighs,
For all the yearning womanhood
  Of grey love-laden eyes.

Oh how in words to tell the rest?
  My bird, my child, my dove!
Behold I render best for best,
  I bring thee love for love.

Oh give to God the love again
  Which had from him its birth,—
Oh bless him, for he sent the twain
  Together on the earth.

SUNRISE.

Look o blinded eyes and burning,
Think, o heart amazed with yearning,
Is it yet beyond thine earning,
  That delight that was thine all?—
Wilful eyes and undiscerning,
Heart ashamed of bitter learning,
It is flown beyond returning,
  It is lost beyond recall.

Who with prayers has overtaken
Those glad hours when he would waken
To the sound of branches shaken
By an early song and wild,—
When the golden leaves would flicker,
And the loving thoughts come thicker,
And the thrill of life beat quicker
In the sweet heart of the child?

Yet my soul, tho' thou forsake her,
Shall adore thee, till thou take her,
In the morning, o my Maker,
For thine oriflamme unfurled:
For the lambs beneath their mothers,
For the bliss that is another's,
For the beauty of my brothers,
For the wonder of the world.

From above us and from under,
In the ocean and the thunder,
Thou preludest to the wonder
  Of the Paradise to be:
For a moment we may guess thee
From thy creatures that confess thee
When the morn and even bless thee
  And thy smile is on the sea.

Then from something seen or heard,
Whether forests softly stirred,
Or the speaking of a word,
Or the singing of a bird,
  Cares and sorrows cease:
For a moment on the soul
Falls the rest that maketh whole,
  Falls the endless peace.

O the hush from earth's annoys!
O the heaven, o the joys
Such as priest and singing-boys
  Cannot sing or say!
There is no more pain and crying,
There is no more death and dying,
As for sorrow and for sighing,—
  These shall flee away.

FRAGMENTS.

I.

O FOR one minute hark what we are saying!
  This is not pleasure that we ask of Thee!
Nay, let all life be weary with our praying,
  Streaming of tears and bending of the knee:—

Only we ask thro' shadows of the valley
  Stay of thy staff and guiding of thy rod,
Only, when rulers of the darkness rally,
  Be thou beside us, very near, O God!

II.

I WAILED as one who scarce can be forgiven,
But the good God had pity from afar,
And saw me desolate, and hung in heaven
The signal of a star.

III.

O GOD, how many years ago,
In homes how far away,
A people I shall never know
Have humbled them to pray!

Not once or twice we cry to thee,
Not once, or now and then,—
Wherever there is misery,
Wherever there are men.

IV.

O THAT the sorrowful joy, that the fears and the tumult of loving
All could have vent in the one passionate sigh of a prayer!
All that my tongue could pronounce, that my eyes and my tears could betoken,
All that could never be told, God, let me tell it to Thee!

V.

I AM tired of all the years can give,
I am weary of all these things;
Tho' men should ask, I would not live
The life of seers or kings.

I care no more to learn or teach,
I love no more my breath,
And all but silence is my speech,
My life is all but death.

A LAST APPEAL.

O SOMEWHERE, somewhere, God unknown,
    Exist and be!
I am dying; I am all alone;
    I must have Thee!

God! God! my sense, my soul, my all,
    Dies in the cry:—
Saw'st thou the faint star flame and fall?
    Ah! it was I.

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